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SYMINGTON

Senator Says, "I've Got Secret" But He Hasn't

Its face, Sen. Stuart Symington's
secret intelligence
of Russian missile strength
doubtful, and the senator knows

But Symington, is in the running for
Democratic nomination for the
presidency, and is subject to that
power. He's not above get-
ting political advantage out of the
issue question.

This is not to discount the service
Symington is performing as the devil's
advocate on matters of national secu-
rity. As a former Secretary of the Air
Force and an expert on defense issues,
this man from Missouri can ask some
tough questions that can help pre-
vent the American people from being
hoodwinked on how strong we are mil-
itarily.

In this running appraisal of Ameri-
can and Russian military strength, it
is well to know what military intelli-
gence is. It is more than raw informa-
tion. Useful intelligence is information
that has been evaluated and collated
alongside other known facts about a
potential enemy. Finally it is infor-
mation that has been disseminated and
placed in the proper hands so that it
can be put to the most good.

A democracy faces a tremendous
challenge over the issue of how much
intelligence information the people are
to be trusted with. If citizens are to
be able to make wise decisions in
their own behalf they must have the
facts to help them in that decision-
making.

Obviously, though, in the field of
military matters a line must be drawn
somewhere on making information
public, for disclosure of too much
could endanger the national safety.

No thoughtful citizen wants informa-
tion that would jeopardize the national
interest. At the same time this atti-
tude can be exploited and be used to
cover up mistakes by those in author-
ity.

During World War II, the American
press showed that it was mature
enough not to reveal information that
would be damaging to national secu-
rity.

Now we are engaged in a cold war,
rather than a hot one, and the issue
of secrecy boils anew. Secrecy or the
surprise element is one of the princi-
ples of warfare, an active one or the
pseudo-combat we are now engaged in.

What makes Symington's threat ri-
dicular is that once a secret goes be-
yond its point of origin it no longer
is a secret. So if he has, from the
CIA or some other source, what is sup-
posed to be secret information, it no
longer deserves that description.